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SPEECH

OF

MR. REVERDY JOHNSON, OF MARYLAND,

ON

THE BILL MAKING FURTHER APPROPRIATION TO BRING THE
EXISTING WAR TO AN HONORABLE CONCLUSION,

CALLED

THE THREE MILLION BILL.

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, FEBRUARY 6, 1847.

Mr. REVERDY JOHNSON then rose and addressed the Senate to the following effect:

Mr. PRESIDENT: The question before the Senate is upon the amendment proposed by the Senator from Michigan, (Mr. CASS,) as a substitute for that offered by the Senator from Georgia (Mr. BERRIEN) to the bill which came from the Committee on Foreign Relations. The single inquiry, then, perhaps, is as to the propriety of that amendment. But in what I am about to say on this occasion—probably the only one on which I shall trouble the Senate on this subject—it is my purpose to speak on another question growing out of the proposition of the committee itself. And I feel, Mr. President, that I shall require the indulgence of the Senate in what I am about to say, both for what I may say, and for the manner in which I may present it, because I find myself most unexpectedly thrown into this debate. Nothing was further from my purpose, in this stage of the debate at least, when the Senator from Georgia concluded his admirable speech of yesterday; for, in my simplicity, Mr. President, I took it for granted that the amendment suggested by the honorable Senator from Michigan would not be permitted by him to go to a vote, without his saying a single word in its support. It is upon its face clearly important. It is not so very obviously connected with the bill itself, which he seeks to amend by it; and it is, without any previous notice, suddenly started upon the consideration of the Senate—apparently without even consultation with his political friends. It embraces, sir, a high and momentous principle of public policy, not only in the present condition of the country, but in any similar condition in which it may be hereafter placed. Under these impressions, seeing that the vote was about to be taken, even before the amendment itself was printed, I inquired of my friend, the Senator from Michigan, whether it was not his purpose to state, however succinctly, the grounds on which he had offered it. I was answered—if I heard the Senator correctly—that it was not his intention to do so. I could not have been more surprised, Mr. President, if I had found that Santa Ana had proved true to the engagements, express or implied, under which he was permitted to enter Mexico, and head the troops now in battle-array against us! I was certainly astonished at the answer, but concluded that a night's reflection would satisfy the honorable Senator that it was no less due to the

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country and the Senate, than to his own distinguished reputation, that such a proposition should be maintained with all the ability he could command; and, in that belief, I moved the adjournment. But I have taken nothing by my motion. The honorable Senator is as silent as the grave. Why so? Has the proposition been offered without due reflection? If it has, ought it not to be withdrawn? Has it been carefully considered? Does it meet with the concurrence of his political friends? Does it present the sentiments of the President of the United States? If so, it is due to all that it should be maintained with all the force which that distinguished statesman—the Senator from Michigan—is known to possess. And, upon this side of the chamber, Mr. President, I think we have a right respectfully to ask the aid of lights which we are not able, of ourselves, to furnish. Let the effulgent intellect of the honorable Senator shine upon this proposition! Let the darkness of our minds be illumined, so that we may be able to see it in its true intrinsic excellence! I do not yet despair, although the prospect is exceedingly discouraging. The American people have a right to expect it—the well-known reputation of the distinguished Senator, at home and abroad, invokes it. Public feeling will not, and should not, be satisfied without it. His high character—his long experience—his clear judgment—his nice sense of honor, public and private, cannot fail to make the world solicitous for the grounds on which he places this amendment. And I do trust that, although a night's reflection has not brought the Senator on the floor as yet, that we shall find him in his proper place on Monday next.

What is the proposition? In order to understand it, it is necessary to see what the bill is to which it is proposed as an amendment. The President of the United States, first in secret session, and afterwards in open session, during the last winter, recommended an appropriation of two millions of dollars to enable him to negotiate a peace with Mexico. He reiterates that recommendation in his annual message at the commencement of the present session. The Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, speaking the sense of the committee of course, reports a bill appropriating not two, but *three* millions, and he accompanies it with a speech, to which, by and by, I shall pay my respects. What is this bill? That three millions of dollars are appropriated for the purpose of defraying any extraordinary expense which may be incurred, in order to bring the existing war with Mexico to a speedy and honorable conclusion. The Senator from Georgia proposed to append a proviso, on which it is not my purpose, in this connexion, to say anything. Then comes the amendment of the Senator from Michigan; and what is it? It is that the appropriation should be passed in the first place, and as one of the reasons of its being passed, it states the character of the war in which we are engaged with reference to its causes, it states, as another reason, the terms on which the termination of the war is to be concluded, as regards the extent of any indemnity which the United States have a right to demand, and without which the war is to go on interminably; and, as a third reason, that in order to begin to conclude it, the President of the United States must first consider and decide the nature and extent of such indemnity. It is in relation to the first of these grounds that I ask my friend from Michigan most respectfully to state, at his own good pleasure, why it is necessary, in a bill appropriating three millions of dollars to terminate by an honorable treaty the war in which we are en-

gaged, to set forth what the character of the war is? Has he any misgivings upon that subject? Does he apprehend that his own opinion will not be the opinions of the people of the United States? Does he fear that the civilized world may come to a different conclusion in reference to the character of this war? I should be inclined to think so. Mr. President, we are presenting an extraordinary spectacle. The war in which we are engaged, so far as the Congress of the United States are concerned in its declaration, was declared on the 13th of May last. In the preamble of the law declaring it, it was stated that it had been brought about by an unauthorized act of hostility on the part of Mexico; very many of the Senators believed that that assertion was unfounded in fact, and were compelled to vote—such of them as did vote—for the bill with that declaration, only from the patriotic impulses which they were unable to restrain, that in any and every condition of things the honor of the United States must be vindicated, our troops protected, and our arms saved from defeat. I was not one of those who differed as to the fact alleged in the preamble. I stated then the grounds of that opinion. It is unnecessary to reiterate them now. But there were high and patriotic spirits in this body—men who would do honor to any land—whose whole feelings are inseparably connected with the honor of the country, who, believing differently, and still willing to stand by the country, proposed to strike out that part of the bill. But their proposition was voted down. That ought to have satisfied the Senators on the other side. But it seems it did not. On each and every occasion since, in which a tolerable pretext offered itself for resorting to the same thing, the effort has been made. Even in a resolution of thanks to the gallant men who have covered the nation with glory, this clause was suffered to find its way! And many Senators on the other side, including the Senator from Michigan, voted to retain the clause. Now, the Senator from Michigan insists on having the same thing incorporated into this bill. He must again revive a declaration in which many of his brother Senators do not unite; in order, apparently—though such certainly cannot be his purpose—to drive them to vote against the bill, or again compel them to vote a war to be just, which in their consciencies they believe was illegally brought upon the country. Now, sir, I could very readily understand why a proposition like this was proposed to be incorporated into this bill if it were germane to the matter. But is the character of the peace which we are to have—are the objects which we seek to attain, to be in any manner affected by the causes which led to the war? This bill is proposed in good faith, no doubt, by the President of the United States, and with equal good faith by the Committee who have reported it. It means peace. It desires peace. It seeks to avoid all the obstacles to the attainment of that end. Now I submit that the Senator from Michigan cannot but see, when he considers the object of the bill, that just as he provokes Mexico—just as he insults the public opinion of Mexico, by declaring her to be an aggressor without cause—just in the same proportion does he increase the impediments to the attainment of the end which the bill was designed to accomplish—the speedy and successful termination of the war. The proposition, therefore, has nothing to do with the bill itself in which it is proposed to be incorporated, unless it be to defeat it. The Senator from Michigan, however, if I may judge of his present opinion from the phraseology which he has adopted in his amendment, is now apparently anxious to place the justice of this war, not

on the facts which the country may examine and decide for themselves, but simply on the fact that the Congress of the United States, by the act of the 13th of May, have declared the war to be just. Let me read his amendment. It is this:

Strike out all after the word "provided," and insert: "And it is hereby declared to be the true intent and meaning of Congress, in making this appropriation, that, as by the act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists between that Government and the United States, agreeably to the declaration made by this Congress, on the 13th day of May last."

It is the declaration, therefore, made in the act of 13th of May that makes the war a just one on our part! The fact itself is made to depend, by the amendment of the Senator, exclusively on that simple declaration! Well, then comes his "therefore." What I have read is the whole preamble to the amendment.

"Therefore the interest and honor of this country require that the said war be vigorously prosecuted to a successful issue."

I suppose it is not necessary to call one from the dead to tell us that. A nation engaged in a war—just or unjust—is in a condition in which every consideration demands that it should be brought to a successful and honorable termination. That is not then the object of the Senator—that successful and honorable termination of the war is connected with another sentiment of the Senator from Michigan—that a reasonable indemnity should be obtained from Mexico for the wrongs which she has committed towards the government and citizens of the United States. Well, what is the indemnity? Why, I understand the President of the United States to say, in his message, that the war having been commenced by Mexico, it has been carried into the enemy's country, and will be vigorously prosecuted there, with a view of obtaining an honorable peace, and thereby securing ample indemnity for the expenses of the war and the claims of our citizens. Now, I am sure that the Senator from Michigan is not prepared to say that the President, in that part of his message, has claimed anything unreasonable. Then the reasonable indemnity for which the Senator from Michigan supposes that the war should be prosecuted, is full indemnity for all the expenses of the war, and full indemnity for all that the government of Mexico owes to citizens of the United States. How is this to be attained? One would suppose, Mr. President, from reading that part of the amendment to which I have called the attention of the Senate, that it was to be effected by a vigorous and successful prosecution of the war. But this is not proposed for the purpose of prosecuting the war vigorously. We have given full assurance on both sides of the chamber of our readiness to aid in such a prosecution of the war. It is a libel on the patriotism of the Senate to suppose that any member, on either side of it, has for a moment hesitated to place at the disposal of the Executive, everything in money and in men which he wanted in order to bring the war to a speedy and successful termination. We have voted men without limit. We have voted for the description of troops which he asked, and voted many of us, against the opinions of some of the President's particular friends. We are voting money to the whole extent of his demand. We are willing to go further. Come when he may, asking for more money or more men, and if he give us reasonable evidence that they are necessary to bring the war to a speedy and successful termination, he will find as ready a spirit of acquiescence on this as on the other side of the chamber. But what is this bill? Does

this bill look to a successful termination of the contest by a vigorous prosecution of the war? Why, if it pass—if I may be permitted to use the expression—it rather shows the “white feather!” It fears—it is founded on the apprehension—that no such peace as we are willing to obtain can be procured by means alone of a vigorous prosecution of the war. Its object is not to conquer a peace, but to buy a peace! And, Mr. President, the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations, in his speech as reported, and as I understood him to say correctly reported—stated, perhaps inadvertently, why it is that it is so absolutely important now, that this bill should meet the sanction of Congress. I think he has done so inadvertently; because he has, I am inclined to suppose, been affording, in what I am about to read from him, “aid and comfort” to the enemy; and I beg him to take care, if he is in earnest in it, that he does not meet with presidential or organic censure. After speaking of the debility of Mexico—her distress—her conquered towns and provinces—her agitation—her factions—the honorable Senator tells us—(the truth will come out when the heart is full of it—and we may well suppose that the thought was suggested to him in some anxious colloquy with the manager of our finances!)

“ON OUR PART, we BEGIN TO FEEL THAT WE ARE ENGAGED IN AN EXTENSIVE WAR—a war attended BY A GREAT SACRIFICE OF LIFE, AND ONE CALCULATED TO EXHAUST, TO A GREAT EXTENT, THE MEANS OF THIS GOVERNMENT, AND IF CONTINUED FOR A GREAT WHILE LONGER, MUST RESULT IN IMPOSING HEAVY BURDENS UPON OUR PEOPLE.”

That is the source of solicitude, and that no doubt is the fact. The only point in which the Senator is mistaken is that we have “just” begun to “feel” this. It was felt some time since! Well, now, the Senator from Michigan says, that being engaged in a war justly commenced it is our duty vigorously to prosecute it, and to pass a bill appropriating three millions of dollars to *buy* a peace! I want him to show the connection between the object and the means of accomplishing the object, when he hereafter shall think proper to address the Senate. The Senator from Arkansas, the honorable Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations says, we want peace—our treasury, like the treasury of Mexico, is exhausted—our people like the people of Mexico, are about to be mulcted in heavy assessments—our means from any and every quarter from which they can be collected are about to be expended for the necessary support of this war—as burdens, almost intolerable, threaten us in the prosecution of the war, we want peace—peace we will have—but we will have it, he says, through this bill, *by buying it!* Here is an evident contradiction—an hostility—as to the grounds upon which this bill is maintained between the two distinguished Senators to whom I have referred. One is for obtaining a successful peace by a vigorous prosecution of the war—the other is for obtaining a successful peace by purchasing it! Let us put the proposed amendment, of the Senator from Michigan as a preamble to the bill and see how it reads: “Whereas, and it is hereby declared, to be the true intent and meaning of Congress in making this appropriation, that as by the act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists between that government and the United States, agreeably to a declaration made by this Congress on the 13th of May last, therefore the interest and honor of this country require that the said war be VIGOROUSLY PROSECUTED to a successful issue, until a reasonable indemnity shall be obtained from Mexico for the wrongs

she has committed upon our government and citizens of the United States, Therefore, be it enacted, that we give three millions of money to buy a successful issue and a reasonable indemnity." [A laugh.] Why, what a lame and impotent conclusion is here, Mr. President! Sword in hand the Senator from Michigan marches up to the foe, threatens to exterminate him, but then suddenly stops and says, "My dear sir, you may have my sword if you take my purse, and let us stand quits!" Would that be an *honorable and vigorous prosecution of a private personal contest*? Would that be a *glorious termination of it*? There could be but one answer; and what would be dishonorable as between individuals, is equally dishonorable as between nations. And I say to the Senator from Michigan, in all good faith, if he means—as I am sure he does mean what he says—that this war can only be honorably terminated by its vigorous prosecution, he owes it to himself to vote against this bill. That would be the predicament in which he would stand if the bill were allowed to utter its own solitary voice, without the carefully prepared commentary of the Senator from Arkansas. But it does not stand by itself. It is accompanied by this official commentary; and what story does that tell us? After indulging himself in the hope that perhaps the vote on the bill would be unanimous—a hope founded on the proceedings of last session—that Senator tells us that we have reduced impoverished Mexico to extremities; and then says:

"We had kept our army out of the country which was claimed by us for a considerable time before the commencement of the war, for the express purpose of securing peace by showing, what was felt, a forbearance and a disposition to avoid a hostile collision. In making this peace, after all that has occurred, the United States, of course, would expect to receive, to some extent at least, indemnity for the expenses of the war, and they would expect also the payment of the claims held by our citizens against the Republic of Mexico; and this indemnity, for these purposes, in consequence of her inability to give any other, would be expected in the shape of a cession of territory. He was not authorized to state *precisely* what territory this government would require for this indemnity, and for the payment of these claims; *but he supposed that no Senator would think they are to get less than New Mexico and Upper California.* He did not suppose that a treaty of peace *with less than this would ever pass this body.*"

That is, Mr. President, we are to take as much as we can, but the honorable Senator thinks that that is the least that could be accepted! Then the inquiry suggests itself to him—and no doubt it was the subject of deliberate consideration—may there not be some difficulty in getting a treaty? Mexico is distracted—the faction that is in the ascendant to-day is down to-morrow! The difficulty stared the committee in the face, and the distinguished Senator, the chairman of the committee rises to meet it. How? The Senator had told them:

"Our arms had triumphed everywhere. We had got possession of a large portion of Mexico. We had possession of some of her seaports, and held others blockaded. We were powerful, and in a condition to extend our conquests."

Why, they will take the whole of Mexico, if she were not careful, and we will, mayhap, again hear on that side of the chamber, what so frequently came from the Senator from Michigan on a former occasion—"The whole or none!"

Mr. CASS. Oh! only 54 deg. 40 min.

Mr. JOHNSON. I understand—nothing short of that.

Mr. CASS. What we could get!

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, and that is what must satisfy us in this instance—just what we can get, and no more. Why, already we cannot stand it, for

it is hurting us confoundedly, says the Senator from Arkansas ; " We begin to feel that we are engaged in an expensive war—a war attended by A GREAT SACRIFICE OF LIFE, and one calculated to exhaust to a great extent the means of our government, and if continued for a great while longer, MUST RESULT IN IMPOSING HEAVY BURDENS UPON OUR PEOPLE." But the Senator proceeds :

" The intelligence possessed by the President gave them reason to believe, that by a certain advance in money, to be made to them in their exhausted and impoverished condition, *to pay off their army and other expenses, they would be willing and able to make peace, and cede, for the objects specified, that portion of the country he had named.*"

Here is the picture, Mr. President, drawn to the life, showing what the object of this bill is ! Before I proceed, let us go a little beyond it and behind it. The President of the United States, in his annual message, when justifying the permission which he had authorized to be given to Santa Ana to return to Mexico, tells us, among other things, that on the day that we declared the war, as it is said—the 13th May—on that very day he gave the order, or caused the order to be given, that Santa Ana might be permitted to return to Mexico. (He took special care though not to mention to us that fact ! But on that day he gave the order.)

MR. CALHOUN here (in his seat) said : Is the Senator certain of this.

MR. JOHNSON. I cannot be mistaken about it. The President shall speak for himself. In his message of December last, he says :

" In view of these facts and circumstances it was, that, when orders were issued to the commander of our naval forces in the Gulf, on the 13th day of May last, the day on which the existence of the war had been recognized by Congress, to place the coasts of Mexico under blockade, he was directed not to obstruct the passage of Santa Ana to Mexico, should he attempt to return."

Now what were the circumstances under which he gave the order and the reasons which, in his opinion, from these circumstances justified it ? He tells us, in a preceding part of the same message, relating to the same subject :

" Our object was the restoration of peace ; and with that view, no reason was perceived why we should take part with Paredes, and aid him, by means of our blockade, in preventing the return of his rival to Mexico. On the contrary, it was believed THAT THE INTESTINE DIVISIONS WHICH ORDINARY SAGACITY COULD NOT BUT ANTICIPATE AS THE FRUIT OF SANTA ANA'S RETURN TO MEXICO, AND HIS CONTEST WITH PARADES, MIGHT STRONGLY TEND TO PRODUCE *a disposition with both parties to RESTORE and preserve peace with the United States.*"

The INTESTINE DIVISIONS in which he might involve Mexico—an avowal upon its face that the controlling reason for this extraordinary conduct was to bring peace to the United States—to obtain an honorable and successful termination of the war by sending into the country of our enemy a man to produce intestine difficulty—to overturn the government—not by our arms and our valor, but through the instrumentality of one whose tyranny had compelled the people to exile him—by the hope that his return would be attended with intestine difficulty—by revolution, involving Mexico in civil war—involving it in still greater embarrassments than that created by the war with us, and so to induce them to enter into a peace, which, if united, we might not be able to conquer !

Well, Santa Ana goes, accompanied by a troop of officers—he passes our blockade by order of the President of the United States. The moment he got there, he is found giving " aid and comfort" to the enemy ; and he is enabled to do so by this act of our own President. He puts down all opposition. The country apparently rises as one man at his bidding. All

the resources of the nation are put under his command. The dying hopes of the people are revived, all by virtue of this act of the President of the United States—and Santa Ana now stands the chosen leader, and most approved soldier that Mexico for years has boasted, at the head of thirty or forty thousand men. He leads the country. His will, by the very physical force which he is able to wield, must be the will of the nation. What the will of the nation in fact is—how firm and resolved their determination to fight to the last extremity—to die in the last ditch—no Senator can doubt, who heard on another and recent occasion, what was read by the Senator from New York, (Mr. DIX,) from journals published in that country. There Santa Ana is. There we have not the means as yet to meet him. In May last, fifty thousand men—all he asked—were placed at the command of the President of the United States. He calls out but a trifling quota. Up to November last, his War Secretary writes that they want no more. Five days afterwards ten additional regiments were called into the field, and as soon as we meet here, ten additional regiments of regular troops are demanded. Now, what is to be done? My friend, the Senator from Arkansas, says that there may be difficulties in the way of effecting peace—that Mexico may be unwilling to give up any territory—territory won by their valor, and portions of it literally mired by their blood. But there is, says he, one way of accomplishing it. The army is in the ascendant. Santa Ana is at its head. If the army is paid, *they may be willing and they may be able to make a peace.* Willing—how? Santa Ana being the President of the republic, by force of that army, may put down the opposition. Why buy up the enemy then, is said to be the true policy—pay this chosen leader of Mexico the price that he demands! You may get such a peace as the Senator says is indicated—a peace indemnifying the United States for the expense of this war, and the debt due to our citizens by the government of Mexico, by a cession of territory, Upper California and New Mexico. Now, Mr. President, let me put it to the Senator from Arkansas, what would he say if Mexico should pass such a law as this, appropriating three millions to buy a peace with the United States—stating upon its face or by its official commentary, that they expected to accomplish it, by buying off Zachary Taylor and his troops? Would not he and the whole nation be in a fury of indignation at such an attempt to tamper with our army? Peace cannot be made, says the Senator, in the present state of things—the difficulties are insuperable—the character of the peace which we demand, and which alone we will take, renders those obstacles entirely insuperable—for it cannot be made but by a dismemberment of the territory of the enemy. But there is one way to accomplish it. We have intelligence from Mexico, satisfactory to the committee—communicated by the President to Congress—that such a peace can be obtained. What, then, is the intelligence which warrants this particular bill and this accompanying commentary? Intelligence that *the President of the United States can buy up this army*—he can in that way put an end to this war, *and get as much territory as he wants.* Now, I ask my honorable friend, the Senator from Michigan, when he comes to reply—for I know he will, notwithstanding his present misgivings—I ask him, as a soldier, full of the soldier's pride; I ask him as a statesman, imbued with a statesman's elevated feeling, if he would consider a peace obtained in that way, an honorable peace; or if he would regard it as a peace obtained by a "vigorous prosecution" of this war? Now,

one thing cannot but have suggested itself to the Senate, and that is, how it happened that when in the month of July last—I think it was July—[A SENATOR. August.] Well, then, when in the month of August last, Santa Ana, having his orders no doubt communicated to him, or else he would not have run the risk of capture, that he might go into Mexico, the President came to us with a message in secret session, and afterwards in public, asking us to give him two millions of money to enable him to negotiate a treaty, the honorable Senator from Arkansas—who is supposed, necessarily, to have consulted the Executive on this subject, now proposes three millions? Has Santa Ana raised his demands? He had not as much of an army in August as he has now. The President had more confidence in him in August than now—confident in his consciousness, not that it would keep him straight, but that it might keep him from going wrong. Why, I ask the Senator—when he comes to close this debate, as I presume he will—when two millions were supposed to have been sufficient in August last, three millions are now indispensable? Are these three millions to be considered as part of the expenses of the war?

[MR. SEVIER. Yes, part of it.]

There are two armies in the field—the American and the Mexican; and so it seems we are willing, out of the treasury of the United States, to pay the expenses of both, provided Santa Ana thinks proper to cede to the United States at least New Mexico and Upper California! If he does not do it in a short time, as the Senator intimates, and permits this war to go on, we will want a great deal more—perhaps the whole of Mexico. It appears to me to be a most extraordinary proposition. We are to make peace with Mexico, who, by the confession of the Senator, is herself trodden down by contending factions—who is not free—who numbers amongst her tyrants this very Santa Ana—who looks to the army with the dread which the past course of the army is well calculated to inspire; we are to make peace with this poor, down-trodden, impoverished people, who have been reduced to such an abject and helpless condition by this very army, and this very leader, by pouring gifts into the hands of their tyrants, and then transferring them, in spite of themselves, from the institutions in which they have been bred—from the associations in which they have been brought up, and which they value, into an integral portion of the United States, to be subject to our laws and government! The principle is wrong, Mr. President. I know that the Senator from Arkansas and those who agree with him, entertain a different view of this proposition, and, of course, entertain it on high and elevated grounds. That, it is not for me to doubt. But I have a right to my own opinion. Standing here then as an American Senator, I declare, with all the emphasis and solemnity due to the occasion, that this project of terminating the war by dismembering a sister republic is so revolting to my moral sense, to all my notions of propriety, honor, and justice, that I would see my arms sink palsied by my side, rather than agree to it! There is a principle pervading the amendment of the Senator from Michigan, which is to me even more alarming. I understand it to be this: Congress having declared this war by the act of the 13th May, it is the duty of the United States to prosecute it to a speedy and successful termination; and that only is to be done by obtaining a reasonable indemnity, and that the management of it rests exclusively with the President of the United States! See where this doctrine leads. Now, I do not say that this war

was brought on by any act of the President of the United States, with which Mexico had a right to find fault. Others may think it was. I am by no means sure that a majority of the people of the United States, do not think so. I am not also free from doubt, but that that is the light in which the civilized world now regards it. The President brings on the war—he brings on a state of hostilities, to use a term used upon a former occasion by the Senator from South Carolina, farthest from me, (Mr. CALHOUN.) It involves the Congress of the United States in a direct responsibility, by following that state of hostilities, by a declaration of war. That was done here. The Senator from South Carolina refused to vote—the only Senator who refused. (A WHIG SENATOR. Not the only Senator.) I am aware of that. I intended to say the only Senator on the other side. He refused to vote. He and others thought, then, that there was not evidence to satisfy him that the war was brought about by the act of Mexico. Our army is in peril. The national honor is involved. The glory of our flag is hazarded. It must be saved at all and every risk. We pass by the alleged illegal act of the President. We instantaneously leap to the conclusion, that we must declare the war in order to save the national honor. We gave the declaration to the world. Now the war is upon us. What says the Senator from Michigan? Congress has just the power to declare the war, but over its management, over its termination, over the terms of its termination, the powers of Congress are impotent! The war must go on until a treaty is negotiated satisfactory to the President, and is submitted by him to the Senate for ratification. If he refuses to treat—if he refuses to listen to terms—if imbued with the lust of dominion which seems to have seized upon so many in the United States to the utter bewilderment of judgment, he is resolved to get the territories of Mexico, it is his right to go on until he brings Mexico into a condition in which, sooner or later, she must be if the war go on, and when we can be indemnified only by a cession of the whole! What are we to do? Can we not even declare our opinions? Can we not give an opinion which, if the President of the United States thinks proper to resist, would involve him in the danger of a just impeachment? I am not here arguing Mr. President, that the treaty-making power is not exclusively in the President and the Senate—that the House have anything to do either with the initiatory or final step; but I am here to maintain that, looking to the character of the government—looking to the distribution of powers amongst the several departments of the government—looking to the reason which causes the whole power of declaring war to be vested in Congress by the Constitution—Congress must, according to the spirit of that instrument, have some right to say how it is to be conducted, and when it is to be terminated. And above all, when it is announced as one of the objects of this war, that territory is to be acquired, and that to an extent which, according to the statement of the President himself in this message, is equal to the whole of the territory embraced in the thirteen original States of this Union, the Congress of the United States have a right to be heard. The inevitable result of a different doctrine would be this—that the President may bring us to a state of hostilities, which will compel us to declare war, and then he can go on to prosecute it, until he is tired of his defeats or his triumphs. Now I am not entirely certain whether my recollection serves me right—some Senator on the floor, particularly the honorable Senator from South Carolina, (Mr. CALHOUN,) who was a member of

the House at the time, can no doubt set me right—but I am under the impression that in the declaration of war in 1812, the causes of the war and the objects of the war was stated in the bill itself—

Mr. CALHOUN. In the accompanying report.

Mr. JOHNSON. In the report, then, which accompanied the bill, as the honorable Senator informs me. But we have no report accompanying this with such statements. That was not permitted. The iron will of a majority, as patriotic, I admit, as we are, deemed it proper to rush the declaration of war through without even a moment's time to deliberate. Now, I apprehend, Mr. President, I am not mistaken when I say, that if, upon the 13th of May, the President of the United States himself had sent us a message containing what is contained in the speech of the honorable Senator from Arkansas—or if the Committee on Foreign Relations had accompanied the act of the 13th May, with a report containing what is contained in that speech, that the object of carrying on this war was to get territory, not to vindicate the national rights—not to drive off supposed or alleged invaders of our soil—not to protect our sister State of Texas, one of the States of the Union, and her territories—but, in order to pay our own citizens the debts due them by Mexico, which Mexico was unable, because of her poverty, to pay, and in order to obtain New Mexico and California—that law could not have passed this body in that shape, and would not have passed, Mr. President, for reasons so forcibly suggested by my friend who sits near me, the Senator from Georgia, (Mr. BERRIEN.) No man was so blind then—no man is so absolutely blind now—as not to see that the questions to arise on the admission of any new territory into the United States, are questions likely to cause this Union to totter to its very foundations. We have seen some indications of the feelings of the South on this subject, in the language of the learned Senator to whom I allude. We have seen, if possible, still more excitement manifested in a resolution proposed this morning by the Senator from Alabama, (Mr. BAGBY.) What have we witnessed? One of the greatest States of this Union—the State of New York—whose voice will be potential, in all human probability, in all our subsequent political conflicts, through one of her representatives on this floor presented to this body resolutions which speak the fixed and abiding opinions of that State upon this subject. Go beyond the resolutions; look at the manner in which they were passed. By consulting the records of the Legislature of that State we will see that there were but nine dissenting voices.

Mr. BAGBY here asked for a reading of the resolutions.

Mr. JOHNSON. I intend to call for the reading of them in a moment. What takes place in the coterminous and almost equally powerful State of Pennsylvania? That State has passed resolutions of the same import, and by a voice equally loud and decided. The Legislature of Ohio in one of its branches, has proclaimed, in an equally unanimous voice, almost the same declaration; and if I am not incorrectly informed, one of the branches of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, which the honorable Senator who has moved the amendment so ably represents, has announced the same to be her will. Now what is this will? The resolution of New York speaks the sense of all; and I stop a moment until the Clerk reads it.

[Here the Clerk read the joint resolutions of the Legislature of New York, which sets forth “that no peace with Mexico can be regarded as honorable to the United States, which shall not secure full indemnity for

the aggressions committed upon the rights of this country and its citizens, and that if any territory is hereafter acquired or annexed, the act by which it is acquired or annexed should contain an unalterable fundamental article or provision, whereby slavery or involuntary servitude shall be forever excluded.”]

The Senator from Alabama, (Mr. JOHNSON continued,) at once—for I suppose he did not know of the existence of the resolutions till he heard them read—

Mr. BAGBY. I never dreamed of such a thing.

Mr. JOHNSON. The honorable Senator instinctively at once—and his people will honor him for it—flies to the rescue of their institutions, which he supposes to be unconstitutionally and unnecessarily assailed by those resolutions. It is not my purpose, however, to speak now of the subject which the resolutions embrace.

Mr. BAGBY. I hope the resolution offered by me will be read also.

Mr. JOHNSON. I have sent for it, sir.

[The resolution was then read as follows :

Resolved, As the opinion of the Senate, that the resolution of the Legislature of New York, declaring “ that if any territory is hereafter acquired by the United States, or annexed thereto, the act by which such territory is acquired or annexed, whatever such act may be, should contain an unalterable fundamental article or provision, whereby slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, shall be forever excluded from the territory acquired or annexed,” is in derogation of the Constitution of the United States, and at war with the rights and interests of the States in which slavery exists.]

Mr. JOHNSON proceeded. Nobody doubts that the Senator from Alabama not only speaks his own opinion, but the opinion of his constituents, on the subject of that resolution. Sir, I make bold to say, and I say it after some opportunities of knowing—that the voice of the North on this subject will be uniform and unalterable. It is useless to inquire into the constitutional question involved in it until it is forced upon us. It is useless to examine what rights will be left to the South, if it is to be forced upon us. I mention the fact only that there is one universal opinion pervading all political sects; and I make bold to say, Mr. President, that no representative, who dares even in accordance with his convictions, by any act of his, upon this floor or elsewhere, to go against that pervading sentiment of his constituents, will ever be permitted again to represent the people. It is a matter of feeling. It results from a settled and abiding conviction that slavery is wrong in the abstract as well as in reality. It grows out of a belief in the extent of human rights. It is a spirit of liberty, having its birth and its home in the heart. I am sure that I err not when I say, that if it has not already covered the whole North, the whirlwind of opinion is rushing on, and no man will be permitted to stand who attempts to resist it. There is but one way to obviate it, and thank God! that way is open to us, and that way leaves us as we are—a happy, united, and powerful people—it is by keeping the question out—by bringing no territory in; and, in my judgment, it may be done consistently with the vindication of the national honor. What are the hundred or the hundreds of millions in which this war may involve us? No man will feel the pressure of it a moment. No man would know of its existence, unless he were told of the fact. For what is additional territory wanted? Have we not enough, not only for the men of the present day, but for the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions, who may come into existence hereafter? Have we not degrees of latitude

enough to furnish us with every thing which may minister to man's wants or comforts, as far as depends upon soil or climate? The progress of the United States thus far announces that we have all this. No other people who have ever appeared on the theatre of the world, in the past or present time, can compare in any prosperity which they may have enjoyed or in any glory which they may have acquired, with the prosperity which has been enjoyed or the glory which has been acquired by the people of the United States, under their present Constitution and on their present territory. Sir, the war in which we are engaged will be forgotten except in the splendor of its achievements. They, through all time, will tell the world what are the extent and ability of American valor. They will proclaim in all time, that whenever and wherever and however associated, American courage and American skill, under the guidance of American wisdom, are equal to any emergency. But, sir, glories still greater, still more attractive in the eyes of all good men and genuine patriots, if we be true to ourselves await us. Who is there, looking through the vista of time, no matter how fruitful his imagination or sanguine his temperament can tell of the power and of the happiness which are sure to belong to those who are to succeed us if this Union lasts? Sir, the South is in no danger, from whatever you may term the lowest prejudices of the North, or the political fanaticism of the political demagogues of the North, if her people are true to themselves, and stand together as one man. Let the South maintain its fealty to the Constitution, and there need be no apprehension beneath its protecting ægis. But when a new question is brought into existence, and new States are to be added to the Union—when a territory equal in extent—as says the President of the United States—to the whole thirteen original States of this Union, is about to become part of the United States *by conquest*, then indeed a new and alarming element is cast upon the political waters, and even the most sanguine, if patriotic, cannot fail to tremble. In the name of all that we hold most sacred and dear, Mr. President, why is it that we are willing to hazard such an inheritance for such an acquisition? Sir, are we not satisfied with the present Constitution of the United States? Have we not territory enough to answer all the reasonable wants of human society? Has not the Constitution given us all the blessings which man can derive under any conceivable form of government? Sir, the Constitution was reared for immortality, if any work of man can aspire to such an existence? But it may, to use the words of another, “perish in an hour from forgetfulness, corruption, or negligence of its only keepers, the people!” What, is to be done? I ask Southern men and Northern men, again disclaiming any intention to argue the question, till it is forced upon us, what is to be done if the crisis come? The North is firm as the soil upon which her freemen tread. The South is equally firm, endowed with indomitable courage, and fully impressed with a conviction of her rights. What is to be the result? One of two things—civil war, in all its inconceivable horrors, or disruption of the Union, and a violated Constitution. Mr. President, I beseech Senators to pause. I point them to the Union. Fair and undefaced as when it came from the hands of its august founders, that fabric still stands in all its “stately height” and solemn grandeur. Are Senators indeed prepared to behold its Doric pillars mingled with the dust? Are they willing to see our glorious Union brokea into shattered and withered fragment of empire? Are there amongst us any who esteem so lightly this

glorious inheritance of ours, that they can regard without the utmost alarm, even the possibility of such a fratricidal conflict as that of which I have spoken, in connexion with this distracting question—and all for what? Because Mexico, being too poor, cannot pay what she owes except by a cession of territory which we will force from her at the point of the bayonet, or failing in that, will buy of her. Mr. President, there are many considerations connected with this subject, of which I cannot now speak without trespassing unduly on the patience of the Senate. I have but a word to say in conclusion. I am sure the Senate and the public, as far as they have taken any interest in what my course in this body, may have been, will do me the justice to say, that by my votes as a Senator of the United States on this floor, I have given a cordial and a hearty support to the present Executive in the conduct of this war. I have done it at the sacrifice of differing in some particulars from Senators, to whose judgment I am in the habit of constantly deferring. I have consulted my own judgment alone, when, perhaps, I should have deferred to that of others. But my instincts were the other way, and I followed them. They taught me that the honor of my country was involved. I was resolved, as far as in me lay to vindicate it. They taught me that the glory of our flag was about to be tarnished. I was resolved that, as far as in me lay, it should be maintained. And I here vote freely and liberally, and will continue to vote with equal freedom and equal liberality, for any and every measure which the President may recommend, if supported by any reasons which can satisfy me that the adoption of such measure will be necessary for the vigorous and successful prosecution of the war. I have known, sir, but one party—my country. I have consulted the interests of but one party, and the honor of but one party—the interest and honor of my country. And if I know my own nature, I shall adhere to the same party throughout. But that same spirit which conducted me in the course to which I have alluded and which caused my heart to leap with joy at the first tidings of the brilliant achievements of our army, would constrain me to blush for my country, if she persisted in exactions upon a feeble and impoverished foe, which the world would justly anathematize as rapine and plunder. We are great and powerful, and we can afford to be magnanimous. But our greatness and power owe their being to our public virtue. A long and unexampled career of prosperity has been the result. Let that virtue fail us—weaken the moral sense of the nation—teach the fatal lesson that the property of others may be seized upon and confiscated—pander to the unbridled lust for foreign territory—and, in my humble judgment, and I speak it with entire deference to those who differ from me—as surely as there is a God—whose dread name I pronounce with all reverence—who rewards virtue and punishes vice, so surely, sooner or later, His rebuke will descend upon us in some overwhelming visitations of indignant wrath!





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